1104. c. 17
6

LETTERS

FROM

GENERAL WASHINGTON

TO

SEVERAL OF HIS FRIENDS,

IN

JUNE and JULY, 1776;

IN WHICH IS SET FORTH,

AN INTERESTING VIEW

OF

AMERICAN POLITICS,

AT THAT

ALL-IMPORTANT PERIOD.

PHILADELPHIA:

REPUBLISHED AT THE FEDERAL PRESS,

1795.

BRITISH MUSEUM
46.
12 10
909

PREFACE

To THIS EDITION.

THE following Letters are, at this time, republiſhed from a Boſton Edition, now out of print, as furniſhing an intereſting appendix to the Official Letters of GENERAL WASHINGTON, which have lately made their appearance.

PREFACE

To THIS EDITION.

THE following Letters are, at this time, republished from a Bolton Edition, now out of print, as furnishing an interesting appendix to the Official Letters of General Washington, which have lately made their appearance.

PREFACE

To the FORMER EDITION of these Letters, from which the PRESENT EDITION is copied.

THE public will naturally be inquisitive as to the authenticity of the following letters. For every thing else, they will speak for themselves: and for their genuineness, the Editor conceives himself concerned to give only such vouchers as he himself has received. By the last packet he was favoured with a letter from a friend, now serving in a loyal corps under Brigadier-General De Lancey of New-York, of which he here subjoins a faithful extract. Pleased with the communication himself (and as he is not ashamed to add, instructed by it) he could not be easy to withhold it from the public at large: inasmuch as, in his judgment, it exhibits a fairer and fuller view of American politics, than the world has yet seen.

——— "*Among the prisoners at Fort Lee, I espied a mulatto fellow, whom I thought I recollected, and who confirmed my conjectures by gazing very earnestly at me. I asked him if he knew me. At first, he was unwilling to own it; but, when he was about to be carried off; thinking, I suppose, that I might perhaps be of some service to him, he came and told me, that he was Billy, and the old servant of General Washington. He had been left there on account of an indisposition which prevented his attending his master. I asked him a great many questions, as you may suppose; but found very little satisfaction in his answers. At last, however, he told me that he had a small portmanteau of his master's; of which, when he found that he must be put into confinement, he entreated my care. It contained only a few stockings and shirts; and I could see nothing worth my care, except an almanack, in which*

which he had kept a ſort of a journal, or diary of his proceedings ſince his firſt coming to New York: there were alſo two letters from his lady, one from Mr. Cuſtis, and ſome pretty long ones from a Mr. Lund Waſhington; and in the ſame bundle with them, the firſt draughts, or foul copies, of anſwers to them. I read theſe with avidity; and being highly entertained with them, have ſhewn them to ſeveral of my friends, who all agree with me, that he is a very different character from what they had ſuppoſed him. I never knew a man ſo much to be pitied. If I remember right, you have ſeen, and have ſome knowledge of him; but it is impoſſible you could form ſo juſt an eſtimate of him as theſe letters will give you. They contain alſo, as you will find, a deal of information, not to be had any where elſe: I aſſure myſelf therefore, you will thank me for the trouble I have taken in copying them for your peruſal."

LETTERS
FROM
GENERAL WASHINGTON.

New-York, June 12, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Waſhington, at Mount Vernon, Fairfax County, Virginia.

DEAR LUND,

THOUGH I wrote to you but a very few days ago, and have nothing new of much moment to communicate, I cannot deny myſelf the comfort of unburthening my mind to you, whenever I have a little leiſure, amid the thouſand anxieties and diſquietudes that almoſt diſtract me. I know the goodneſs of your heart, and that you will attend to me with indulgence and ſympathy, though it be not in your power any otherwiſe to afford me relief. There cannot, in the nature of things, be a ſituation ſo truly irkſome to an ingenuous mind, as the being perpetually obliged to act a part foreign to our true feelings; yet this, alas! as you know, is, and muſt be my lot. I wear a countenance dreſſed in the calm ſerenity of perfect confidence, whilſt my heart is corroded with infinite apprehenſions, and I have no boſom friend near me, to whom I dare lay it open. Tell me, Lund, for you have long been privy to my moſt ſecret thoughts,—truſting to thy native candor, I have never heſitated to lay my heart bare and open to thy inſpection; tell me then, am

I, do you think, more ſubject to fears than other men? For I will not conceal it from you, that, at this moment, I feel myſelf a very coward. Do not miſtake me: I thank my God I have never yet known what it was to fear for any perſonal danger that might befal me. I am not afraid to die: why ſhould I? I am afraid only to die with infamy and diſgrace. And, if I am afraid ſo to die, need I tell you that I am ten thouſand times more afraid to live, like Lucifer, a fallen angel. No, Lund, that were too much; betide what will, I cannot, and I will not, ſurvive either my misfortunes, or my diſgraces. Heaven knows how truly I love my country; and that I embarked in this arduous enterprize on the pureſt motives. But we have overſhot our mark: we have graſped at things beyond our reach: it is impoſſible we ſhould ſucceed; and I cannot with truth ſay, that I am ſorry for it; becauſe I am far from being ſure that we deſerve to ſucceed. That the Britiſh Miniſtry had meditated ſchemes fatal to the liberties of America; and that, if we had not oppoſed their firſt efforts to impoſe taxes upon us, without our conſent, we might have bid adieu to every idea of conſtitutional ſecurity hereafter, I have not a doubt. Nay, I am ſo thoroughly perſuaded of the unworthineſs of their deſigns, and of the duty of every honeſt American to oppoſe them, that, diſſatisfied as I am with my ſituation, were it to do over again, I would rather be even as I am than tamely crouch, whilſt chains were faſtening round my neck; for there is not, in my eſtimation, ſo vile a thing upon earth as a human being who, having once enjoyed liberty, can patiently bear to ſee it taken from him. I would, and I will die ten thouſand deaths, rather than be this thing myſelf. On theſe principles, and theſe only, I firſt took up arms; but my misfortune, and the true ſource of all my uneaſineſs is, that though in good policy, as well as honour, theſe ought to be the principles of every American, I have long ago diſcovered they are not, and on this account alone I dread our

deſeat. Our want of ſkill, our want of ammunition, in ſhort, our want of every thing which an army ought to have, are all, no doubt, exceedingly againſt us; but they are all no hing to our want of virtue. Unuſed to the many arts and devices, by which deſigning men carry their points, I unwillingly l ſtened to my own apprehenſions, when early in the firſt Congreſs, I thought I ſaw a tendency to meaſures which I never could approve of. I reaſoned myſelf, however, out of my fears, with no ordinary reproach on my own meanneſs, in having given way to ſuſpicions, which could not be true, unleſs we had men amongſt ourſelves more flagitious than even thoſe we were oppoſing. At length, however, when a continental army came to be voted for, my fears returned with redoubled force; for then, for the firſt time, I clea ly ſaw our aims reached farther than we cared to avow. It was carried with an unanimity that really aſtoniſhed me; becauſe I knew, many who voted for it were as averſe to the independency of America as I was. And they even ridiculed me for my apprehenſions on that account; and, indeed, when they ſuggeſted, that Great B itain, ſeeing us apparently determined to riſque every thing rather than that they ſhould tax us, would never think of engaging in a civil war with us, which muſt neceſſarily coſt her more than even America could repay her, I co ld not but hope, that I was miſtaken, and that our military preparations might be a good political movement. In one thing, however, we all agreed, that, as the forces were chiefly to be raiſed in New England, it would be extremely raſh and imprudent in the ſouthern delegates to leave them in the poſſeſſion of ſo formidable a power without any check. I need not tell you, that it was this conſideration which, if I am to be credited, ſorely againſt my will, determined me to accept of the command of this army. We ſet out with bad omens; I was miſtruſtful of them in every thing; and they were taught to look upon me with jealouſy. This ſoon manifeſted itſelf in

forming them to any thing like decent diſcipline. But I have, long ago, peſtered you more than enough with complaints on this head. I knew not, however, certainly, that I had been appointed to this high ſtation only to be diſgraced and ruined, till about the middle and latter end of laſt February; when, contrary to my wiſhes, I found it abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould come to open hoſtilities againſt our fellow ſubjects in the miniſterial army. Doubtleſs common prudence required, that when we did attempt it we ſhould, if poſſible, do it ſpeedily and effectually: And, having all the reaſon in the world to believe that large armies would be ſent againſt us early in the ſummer, I reſolved, coſt what it would, to cut off thoſe already here, which would have given us ſuch infinite advantages over any future reinforcements that might be ſent, and this I believed was eaſily in our power; but, as I have already told you, nothing is to be done with our New England allies, unleſs they are let into all your ſecrets. I could not advance a ſtep without communicating my intentions to the gentlemen in the civil department; a thing ever ruinous in war: It ſoon got wind, as I had foreſeen; and it appeared, that the General of the enemy was appriſed of my deſign. Still, however, I perſevered in my purpoſes; which, in ſpite of all his care and caution, I was confident muſt ſucceed, and reduce him to the utmoſt extremity. But (as every military man muſt know) ſo capital a blow was not to be ſtruck without the loſs both of many men, and much property; for my deſign was, if they would not ſurrender by an honourable capitulation, to burn the town about their ears, and ſo ruſh in, and cut them off in their attempts to eſcape to the ſhips. And this, with our ſuperiority of numbers, we certainly could have effected, though, no doubt, it would have been a bloody buſineſs, if they had not ſurrendered, as I think they would. But when, as I was obliged, I laid this before the Council and Repreſentatives, they not only found a thouſand objections to it, but abſolutely reſtrained me, and

I could not have got a man that would have gone on what they called ſo deſperate a ſcheme: Hence was I under a neceſſity of proceeding in that poor, ſlow, and unſoldier-like manner, which not only gave them an opportunity to eſcape, but has taught them to deſpiſe us. There is no forming an idea of the importance of ſuch a ſtroke at that conjuncture. If any thing upon earth could have made America independent and glorious, that was the golden opportunity. I confeſs to you, I had worked my imagination up to ſuch a pitch of high expectation, that my diſappointment has diſpirited me in a manner I never can recover. For, from that moment, I have deſpaired of our ever doing any thing truly great. Any little gleams of ſucceſs, or fairer proſpects we have ſince had, ſerve but to make our inferiority the more conſpicuous: For what incidents can fall out to aggrandize us, who can be made great only by great and ſpirited efforts, when we have ſhewn that we wanted both the underſtanding and the virtue to purchaſe to ourſelves immortal glory on better and cheaper terms than ever we can hope hereafter to have it? But, the worſt remains yet to be told. Some of thoſe very men who were the moſt forward to thwart me in this meaſure, had diſcovered a different way of thinking on other occaſions, and, I am perſuaded, that were the queſtion put to them now, as to this city and the ſouthern regiments, I ſhould not hear a diſſenting voice.—But, let me ſpare you.

After all this, you will again, I doubt not, as you often have, aſk why I continue in a ſituation ſo diſagreeable to me? I wiſh you had forborne this queſtion, the truth being, that I neither am able, nor very willing to anſwer it. My reſolution to hold it out as long as I can is dictated by my feelings, which I neither can deſcribe to you, nor wholly juſtify on paper; but which, however, I find it impoſſible for me to diſregard. The eyes of all America, perhaps of Europe, of the world are fixed on me. It has been our policy, (and, at the time, I thought it well founded) to hold out falſe

lights to the world. There are not a hundred men in America that know our true ſituation; three fourths of the Congreſs itſelf are ignorant of it; yourſelf excepted, there lives not a man at all acquainted with my peculiar circumſtances. The world looks upon us as in poſſeſſion of an army all animated with the pure flame of liberty, and determined to die rather than not be free. It is in poſſeſſion of proofs, that it is ſo, under my own hand: I have always ſo ſpoken of it and I ſtill do. But, you know how remote in my judgment all this is from the truth; though I am not ſure that there is another man in the army, beſides myſelf, that thinks ſo. I ſhould gueſs, however, that there are many. But, tied up as my own mouth is, it is little to be wondered at, that theirs are ſo too, at leaſt to me.

Thus circumſtanced, can you point out a way in which it is poſſible for me to reſign, juſt now, as it were on the eve of action, without the imputation of cowardice? There is no ſuch way. Beſides, diffident and deſponding as I am, how do I know, that it is not ſo with thoſe we have to oppoſe? they certainly have reaſon. The events of war depend on a thouſand minutia, without the ken of a mere byſtander. I know not that the commander of the armies of the low countries, could his heart have been read as you do mine, had not the ſame fears, and the ſame cauſes for them that I have. You learn not this from the hiſtory, nor was it to be expected you ſhould; yet, he ſucceeded at laſt: And, who knows, what an over-ruling Providence, who often brings about the greateſt revolutions by the moſt unlikely means, may intend for America? If it be the will of God, that America ſhould be independent of Great Britain, and that this be the ſeaſon for it, even I and theſe unhopeful men around may not be thought unworthy inſtruments in his hands. And, ſhould we ſucceed, we are heroes, and immortalized beyond even thoſe of former times; whereas diſgrace only, and intolerable infamy await our retreat. In

this perſuaſion, I reſolve to go on; contented, with the glorio s King William, to ſave my country, or die in the laſt ditch.

I am, my dear Lund,

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

G. W.

To John Parke Cuſtis, Eſq. at the Hon. Benedict Calvert's, Eſq. Mount Airy, Maryland.

MY VERY DEAR JACK,

YOU have exceedingly obliged me by your letter which I received by yeſterday's poſt. It diſcovers an attention to the great affairs now carrying on, and an information concerning them, which I own to you I had not given you credit for. Your youth and inexperience pleaded your excuſe: and though you gave me no opportunity to praiſe you for any active exertions, I paid you no ordinary compliments, in my own mind, for your modeſty in forbearing to meddle with things which it was no reproach to you to confeſs, were out of your reach. Conſidering your rank, fortune, and education, whenever it is proper for you to come forward on the theatre, it muſt not be any underpart that you act. You are, therefore, certainly in the right, to decline taking any part at all, till you are fit for a firſt and leading character: And you have my full and perfect approbation of your reſolution to perſiſt in your purpoſe, for the preſent, not to accept of any rank, civil or military. I ſee your anxiety, leſt the preſent opportunity for ſignalizing your juſt love for your country ſhould, by your not unneceſſary cautions, be ſuffered to ſlip by you, unimproved. Your ardour is commendable,

and far be it from me to diſcourage in you a ſpirit I ſo much love. But, whilſt you retain theſe honourable principles, there is little danger of your wanting opportunities to call them forth into action. The momentous enterprize in which your country is engaged, is not to be accompliſhed in this or that year. If, in no longer a period than the ſiege of Troy, we bring all our mighty ſchemes to bear, it will be the greateſt work that ever was perfected in ſo little a time. You have ſet your hea t, you tell me, on a military employment. This is the uſual bent of young men; and, as it was my own, it will be with an ill-grace that I reprehend it in you. But with the experience that I have had of it, I ſhould be wanting in that love and eſteem I owe you, ſhould I heſitate to tell you, that, as your father, there is not a profeſſion you could have choſen in which I ſhould not more cordially have concurred with you. Yet, I love arms; I am married to my ſword, as well as to your moſt amiable mother: and, herein is my witneſs, that I am in earneſt when I ſay, death alone ſhall divorce me from either. I am not ſo blindly devoted, however, to my profeſſion, as not to ſee by how frail a tenure I hold the little reputation I have in it. As a ſtateſman, as a ſenator, it is in the general ſufficient that you mean well, that you are careful to qualify yourſelf to form a right judgment of the true intereſts of your country, and that, with the honeſt impartiality of a freeman, you have ſtill exerted your beſt endeavours to promote thoſe intereſts: But, with a ſoldier, ſucceſs alone is merit; and there is nothing that can atone for the want of it. The world is a worſe judge of military matters, than any other. It would aſtoniſh you to find, on a minute compariſon, how very little difference there was in the ſkill and ſpirit which guided Braddock and Wolfe in the laſt actions of their lives; but, how different has been their fate!—I think I am not without ſome talents for the line of life which has fallen to my lot; but oppoſed, as I muſt be, by men probably, of infinitely ſuperior ſkill,

and encompaſſed moreover with ſuch hoſts of other difficulties and diſcouragements as I am, it is not mine to command ſucceſs. And when either my cotemporaries, or future hiſtorians, ſhall ſit in judgment on my conduct, if, haply, ill fortune ſhould overtake me, ſeeing our miſcarriages only, and having neither curioſity nor ability to inveſtigate the thouſand cauſes which led to them, am I not too well warranted in concluding, that they will be attributed to miſmanagement? Have I not then reaſon to wiſh that your choice had fallen on the quieter but not leſs important calling of a private gentleman; in which, as a ſenator, you might have given proof of your abilities, in a way in which fortune would not have had ſo great a ſhare? But notwithſtanding all this, and if, after all, you be irrevocably determined to try your fortune in the field, and you can gain your mother's and your wife's conſent, I here give it you under my hand, that you ſhall not want mine. Moſt certainly there cannot be a more honourable employment; and if (which heaven avert) fortune ſhould declare againſt you, my conſolation will be, that I can aſſure myſelf, you will deſerve to be ſucceſsful. I will, on the opening of the next campaign, procure you an appointment to the command of a regiment, either here, or in the ſouthern wing. And, if my opinion may have any weight with you, you will, for many reaſons, prefer the being ſtationed in ſome of the ſouthern ſtates. There is no fear of its being an inactive ſtation. I have little expectation that this year will cloſe with aught conſiderably deciſive on either ſide: and if our enemies be able to hold out another campaign, it is moſt likely their policy will be, by means of their naval ſuperiority, to carry on a kind of an incurſive war, by making unexpected deſcents in different and diſtant places. Meanwhile, permit me to preſs you to perſevere in your attention to military matters. The manual exerciſe, which you were ſo juſtly diligent to learn whilſt I was with you, is but the A, B, C, of your profeſſion. Neither will

you profit ſo much as you might reaſonably expect, from the ſtudy of thoſe authors, who have written profeſſedly on the art of war. This is like the learning the game of whiſt by reading Hoyle. I have been witneſs to the miſchievous effects of it. A man, book-learned only, does very well in the ſtill ſcenes of marchings and encampments. But when, in the various buſtles of actual war, a cauſe ariſes, as muſt often be the caſe, not deſcribed in his books, he is utterly at a loſs. I would not, however, have you to underſtand me as if I meant to diſcourage your reading theſe books, at all; ſo far from it, I would have you read them very often, and make yourſelf acquainted with the ſubject as much as you can, in theory. My caution meant only to guard you againſt placing too much reliance on them. Their beſt commentators, next to your own experience, will be the hiſtorians of Greece and Rome; which it is your happineſs to be able to read in the originals. But, the main and moſt eſſential qualification is an high ſenſe of honor, an elevation of ſentiment, and a certain dignified ſtile of behaviour, that diſtinguiſhes, or ſhould diſtinguiſh, a ſoldier from every other man. It is a ſhame indeed, if he who undertakes to command others, has not firſt learned to command himſelf. I will not endure any thing mean or ſordid either in your principles, or your manners; having determined, if it were left with me, to be as ſtrict and rigorous in theſe particulars, as were the knights of old, when a candidate was to be inveſted with the orders of chivalry. I cannot diſſociate the ideas between a ſoldier and a gentleman: and however common it may be to give that laſt appellation to perſons of every character, it yet conveys to me an idea of worths I want words to expreſs. I am not ſolicitous to pay you compliments, even by implication; but, I may certainly be permitted to ſay, that if I had not known you to be a gentleman, you never ſhould have had my conſent to your becoming a ſoldier.

Your obſervations on this important conteſt are juſt and accurate, and diſcover a reach of thought, and a penetration beyond what I had expected of you. What you ſay on the ſubject of independency is perfectly judicious, and, no doubt, highly worthy of all our moſt ſerious conſideration. Yet, I have a preſentiment, that it will take place, and ſpeedily.—Open and unreſerved as my conduct towards you has ever been, I have no reluctance to confeſs to you, that the meaſure is diametrically oppoſite to my judgment; for I have not yet deſpaired of an honorable reconciliation; and whilſt I can entertain but an hope of that, both intereſt and inclination lead me to prefer it to every thing elſe upon earth. Human affairs are oddly ordered. To obtain what you moſt wiſh for, you muſt often make uſe of means you the leaſt approve of: As in bargaining, to obtain a fair and equal price, you muſt frequently aſk more than you wiſh to take. I do not really wiſh for independence; I hope there are few who do; but I have never heard the reaſonings of thoſe, who have proved that, if we did not declare for it, we ſhould fail to obtain the conſtitutional ſubordination to which we are entitled, fairly refuted. I would not have you, therefore, haſtily conclude that if, in this ſtruggle, we fall ſhort of every thing we have claimed, we are worſted: Perhaps, the very worſt thing that could befal us, is that we ſhould gain all. I do aſſure you that, in my opinion, the next misfortune to that of being thruſt from our juſt rank in the order of freemen, would be the giving us up, and leaving us to ourſelves. But, this Great Britain will never do, voluntarily: for, if ever ſhe does, whatever may become of us, from that moment, ſhe may date the commencement of her own downfall.

I am exceedingly happy in the becoming moderation which you obſerve and endeavour to introduce towards the unhappy men whoſe political creeds differ from ours. But for this blot in her ſcutcheon, thrown on her by too many of her raſh and unworthy advocates, by a contrary conduct, this

effort of America would have done her honour, even though ſhe had failed. I am ſhocked at the inſtances of intolerance I daily hear of, and have no power to prevent. But, like the other evils of war, it is a calamity that unavoidably grows out of ſuch a convulſion; and one might as well hope to ſtem the fury of a torrent, as to give laws to an enraged people. It is, however, the duty of every true friend to liberty, by every gentle and conciliatory means in his power, to reſtrain it. And, I am happy to find this ſentiment daily becoming more general amongſt us. All things conſidered, I cannot but think it not a little to our honour, that things have not been carried to a ſtill greater height in this way.

Remember me affectionately to Nelly, and tell her, that though I ſhould be happy to ſee her, I may not hope for that happineſs ſpeedily; as the din of arms, I imagine, would be but unpleaſing entertainment to her; and I have little proſpect of any leiſure, at leaſt before we go into winter quarters. I hope Mr. Calvert, and all the family are well: I beg to be remembered to them. I will write to your mother in a few days. You are very good in leaving her alone as little as may be. Continue to write to me frequently, freely, and fully; the hearing of my deareſt friends' and family's welfare being the only true happineſs I have any chance to enjoy amidſt the perpetual hurry in which I live.

I am, my dear Jack,

Your very affectionate Friend and Father,

Geo. Waſhington.

June 18, 1776.

New-York, July 8, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Washington, at Mount Vernon, Fairfax County, Virginia.

DEAR LUND,

WE are ſtill going on with all imaginable briſkneſs and ſucceſs with our works, which I think are already impregnable. It would really aſtoniſh you to ſee the progreſs we have made. I do not believe that all hiſtory can furniſh a precedent of ſo much being done in ſo little time, or in ſo maſterly a manner, where you had ſo little right to look for conſummate ſkill. If, in every thing elſe, we could but come up to our exertions in theſe fortifications, I ſhould hardly know how to doubt the judgment of thoſe who think that we may bid defiance to the world. But, I know not how it is, I am diffident of every thing. Whilſt almoſt every body elſe ſeems to have perſuaded himſelf, that we have nothing to fear, I alone torment myſelf with thinking that every thing is againſt us. Even from theſe very works, which have inſpired us with ſuch confidence, I anticipate only misfortune and diſgrace. By this time the die is caſt, and America is authoritatively declared free and independent; and unleſs we can be contented to appear ridiculous in the eyes of all the world, we muſt reſolve to ſupport this declaration by a ſuitable conduct:—we muſt fight our way to freedom and independency; for in no other way, ſhall we be permitted to obtain it, farther than words.

A war, therefore, and a moſt ſerious one, is now inevitable. Next to good finances, which it is not my province to provide for, a good army is, doubtleſs, a main requiſite to the carrying on a ſucceſsful war; and a good army, is by no means ſecured, as ſome ſeem to reckon, by ſecuring a large number of men. We want ſoldiers, and between theſe, and raw, undiſciplined men, there is a wide difference.

The queſtion then is, how are theſe raw and undiſciplined men to be formed into good ſoldiers? And I am free to give it as my opinion, that ſo far from contributing to this, will ſtrong-holds, fortified poſts, and deep intrenchments be found, that they will have a direct contrary effect. To be a ſoldier, is to be inured to, and familiar with danger; to dare to look your enemy in the face, unſheltered and expoſed to their fire, and even when repulſed, to rally again with undiminiſhed ſpirit. The Indian maxim is, that it is equally your duty to take care of yourſelf, and to annoy your enemy. To a general, this may not be an unuſeful caution; but I will venture to aſſert, that whenever a private centinel allows himſelf to act on this principle, the odds are, that, in the moment of trial, in his exceeding ſolicitude not to forget the former, the latter will be but little attended to. Now what, I aſk, are all theſe mighty ditches and breaſt-works, but ſo many leſſons and admonitions to our men of what prodigious importance it is to take care of themſelves? It would be almoſt worth our while to be defeated, if it were only to train us to ſtand fire, and to bear a reverſe of fortune with a decent magnanimity. If it had not been for this ill-judged humour of fighting from behind a ſcreen, the 19th of April, and 17th of June laſt year, might have been the happieſt days America ever ſaw. All theſe things have I, again and again, repreſented to my maſters; I am aſhamed to ſay, to how little purpoſe. They return me anſwers and inſtructions, which, though I cannot refute, have not yet convinced what I would call the feelings of my own mind.

This day week, the enemy's fleet was firſt deſcried off Sandy-Hook. They have been employed ſince then in debarking their troops on Staten-Iſland, where they are cantoned, as far as I can judge, in a very uncompact and unguarded manner. I cannot exactly aſcertain their number, but I have reaſon to believe, that they fall ſhort of ſeven thouſand. It is more extraordinary ſtill, that I am not able

to inform you of the exact number of forces under my own command: I fancy however, we might bring into the field, at this place, double their number at a minute's warning; and with this ſuperiority of numbers, making all poſſible allowances for our other diſadvantages, one would hope we might be able to give a good account of them. You, who are ſanguine in the extreme, and all impatience, will eagerly aſk, why we ſuffered them to land unmoleſted, and to remain ſo ever ſince. What excellent expeditions you fire-ſide generals can inſtantly plan and execute! But you forget that they are poſted on an iſland, and that we have no way at coming at them, unleſs they would lend us their ſhips and boats, which I have not preſumed to aſk of them. Aware, however, of the importance of falling on them, whilſt there is a chance of doing it with ſucceſs, and ere they become a match for us, by reinforcements which they daily expect, I have formed a ſcheme, which, at leaſt, is plauſible, and promiſes fair to be ſucceſsful. I have ſubmitted it to Congreſs, and every moment expect their anſwer; and if they will but ſupport me with alacrity, and in good earneſt, my next, I truſt, will not be ſo deſponding. I expect to be all ready to put my plan in execution on Tueſday, or at fartheſt, on Wedneſday night; ſo that probably, at the very moment you are reading this, we may be engaged in a very different ſervice. You will, no doubt, be impatient to hear from me as ſoon as may be, after Wedneſday, and I will not diſappoint you. Meanwhile, I ſhall not need to tell you, that end how it will, all that I freely chatter to you, is to remain a profound ſecret to every body elſe.

Doctor, now Brigadier-General Mercer is here, and is a great comfort to me. Like myſelf, he wants experience; but he is very ſhrewd and ſenſible, and though a Scotſman, is remarkably humane and liberal. I have communicated the whole of my deſign to him alone; and am not aſhamed to own, that I have received much aſſiſtance from him. I know

not how it may turn out; but though neither he nor I are very apt to be ſanguine, we have both confeſſed to be ſo on this occaſion. Animated, however, as I feel myſelf with the near proſpect of at length doing ſomething, not unworthy the high rank to which I am raiſed, I own to you, I take a ſerious pleaſure in it, only as it flatters me with the hope of thereby obtaining a ſpeedier and happier peace. Let us, ſince war muſt be our lot, diſtinguiſh ourſelves as freemen ſhould, in fields of blood; ſtill remembering, however, that we fight not for conqueſt, but for liberty.

I am with the trueſt eſteem,

Dear Lund,

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

G. W.

New-York, July 16, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Waſhington, &c.

DEAR LUND,

HOW cruelly are all my hopes in one ſad moment blaſted and deſtroyed! I am poſitively ordered to wait for the enemy in our lines; and leſt I ſhould be mad enough not to obey their mandates, not a ſingle tittle of any thing I had aſked for, is granted. Thus has a ſecond opportunity of rendering my country an eſſential ſervice, in the way of my profeſſion, been unwiſely, and in the moſt mortifying manner denied me. I profeſs, I hardly know how to bear it; having to regret not only, that two opportunities, ſuch as may never again occur, have been ſuffered to paſs by us unimproved, but that none can happen we can improve. Ma-

naged as matters are, we neither are, nor ever ſhall be a military people ; and yet, in the train in which things are now put, unleſs we are, it were idiotiſm to hope for either freedom or independence.

I remember well, in a converſation I once had with a friend, now moſt unjuſtly as well as unwiſely driven from his friends and his home, on the ſubject of monarchies and republics, he objected to the unavoidable ſlowneſs and dilatorineſs of the executive power in the latter. Aiming to anſwer him in his own way, I replied, that if Popular Councils were ſlow, they yet were ſure, and that in the multitude of counſellors there is ſafety. His anſwer was prophetical. If ever (he ſaid) we of theſe countries ſhould raſhly put theſe things to the proof, it would be found, that however true this adage might be in the cabinet, it was not ſo in the field. Convinced, by melancholy experience, that this is the caſe, and, that without ſome different ſyſtem, we ſhall but expoſe ourſelves to contempt and ruin, I reſolve this evening honeſtly and openly to ſay ſo to the Congreſs. I will go farther, and add, that if they cannot in fact, as well as in appearance, truſt me with the uncontrouled command of their army, I will no longer be their puppet. Why ſhould I ? it being now morally certain that by going on as we have hitherto done, I can neither bring honour nor profit to them ; and yet am ſure to loſe all the little of either which I either have, or might have, poſſeſſed.

I want words to expreſs to you what I have felt, and ſtill do feel on this diſappointment of all my hopes : I had allowed myſelf to build too much on my ſcheme ! and I ſeem to be in the ſituation of one who ſhould be allowed to riſe, on purpoſe only to be thrown down. The enemy, in the midſt of all our bluſterings, muſt deſpiſe us ; and did not ſhame, or ſome better principle reſtrain them, I ſhould be but little ſurpriſed to find General Howe, even with his preſent little handful attacking us,—yes, attacking us in our entrench-

ments. What ſhall I do? To retreat is to entail on myſelf the curſes of every public man in my country; and to go on is certain ruin and diſgrace. Were the world to know only my true hiſtory on this trying occaſion, I perſuade myſelf, all the candid and conſiderate in it would acquit me of blame. But this the world can know only by my reſolving to tell a tale, which, conſidering the rank I now hold in it, muſt involve my country in ſuch internal broils and quarrels, as muſt be fatal to the glorious cauſe in which we have embarked; and this, I truſt, I ſhall have the virtue never to do, be my private wrongs and ſufferings ever ſo great.

I have finiſhed my letter to the Congreſs, to whom I have at length ſpoken in a more peremptory tone, than, I fancy, they have been uſed to. It was abſolutely neceſſary; and I ſhould ill deſerve their confidence, if through any miſtaken complaiſance or diffidence, I heſitated to point out to them the miſchievous conſequences of their interference. I have alſo inſiſted on preciſe inſtructions in what manner I am to conduct myſelf towards the Britiſh commiſſioners, if peradventure, as is probable, their overtures ſhall be made through me. Their anſwer will have a great influence on all my future meaſures; as I ſhall then know, (and ſurely it is time I ſhould) on what ground I ſtand. The very decided and adventurous meaſures, which Congreſs itſelf has juſt taken, is big with the moſt important conſequences, not only to the community at large, but to every man in it. The temper and judgment which they ſhall now manifeſt, on their firſt avowed aſſumption of the reins of government, will be indicative of what we may hereafter expect. Hoping for the beſt, I yet will watch them moſt carefully.

'Tis all fearful expectation: Every man I ſee ſeems to be employed in preparing himſelf for the momentous rencontre, which every man perſuades himſelf muſt ſhortly come on. There is an oſtenſible eagerneſs and impetuoſity amongſt us, I could willingly have excuſed: I ſhould have been better

pleaſed with that ſteady compoſure which diſtinguiſhes veterans. One thing is in our favour, the paſſions of our ſoldiery are ſeldom ſuffered to ſubſide; being conſtantly agitated by ſome ſtrange rumour or other. Happen what will, it can hardly be more extraordinary, than ſome one or other is perpetually prefaging: And we have already performed ſuch feats of valour, whilſt we have no enemies to engage but ſuch as our own imaginations manufacture for us, that I cannot but hope we ſhall do well, merely becauſe no one ever ſeems to entertain a ſuſpicion that we ſhall not. I can as yet give no gueſs, where or when they will approach us: I conclude, however, that they will hardly ſtir, till they are joined by all the men they expect. Deſponding as I am, I wiſh they were arrived; and that, at this moment, they were in a condition to attack us: They may gain by procraſtination, but we are ſure to loſe.

I wrote to Mrs. Waſhington lately, and ſhall again in a week or two, if I do not hear of her ere that in Philadelphia. It has ſurpriſed me, that, after what I wrote, ſhe ſhould heſitate. I beg of you if ſhe be ſtill fearful, to ſecond my perſuaſions by every means in your power. Expoſed as ſhe muſt be to ſo many interviews with people in the army, all of whom are in the way of the ſmall-pox, I have the moſt dreadful apprehenſions on her account. I know not well how the notion came into my head, but it is certain, I have, for ſeveral days, perſuaded myſelf that ſhe is already inoculated, and that, out of tenderneſs and delicacy, ſhe forbears to inform me of it, till ſhe can alſo inform me ſhe is out of danger.

I note ſundry particulars in your letter, to which I am not ſolicitous to give you anſwers. Why, when you have ſo often aſked in vain, will you preſs me for Congreſs-ſecrets? Whatever your or my private ſentiments or wiſhes may be, it is ſufficient for us that we know the higheſt authority in our country has declared it free and independent. All that

is left for us to do is, as far as we can, to ſupport this declaration, without too curiouſly enquiring into either its wiſdom or its juſtice. I firmly believe, that the advocates for this meaſure, meant well; and I pay them but an ordinary compliment in thinking that they were fitter to determine on a point of this ſort than either you or I are. At any rate, the world muſt allow it to be a ſpirited meaſure; and all I have to wiſh for is, that we may ſupport it with a ſuitable ſpirit.

I am, my Dear Lund,

Yours moſt affectionately,

G. W.

New-York, July 15, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Waſhington, &c.

DEAR LUND,

LAST Friday, the Britiſh fleet was ſeen off Staten-Iſland; they have ſince been employed, uninterrupted by us, in debarking their men, ſtores, &c. and as they muſt now, I ſhould imagine, be pretty nearly as ſtrong as they expect to be this campaign, no doubt we ſhall ſoon hear of their motions. I have reaſon to believe, their firſt eſſay will not be on this, but on Long-Iſland; where injudiciouſly, I think, we alſo are, or ſoon ſhall be, in force. Yet, if we do but act our parts as becomes us, be the iſſue as it may, we ſhall at leaſt give them no pleaſing earneſt of what they have to expect in the courſe of the war. But there is no relying on any plan that is to be executed by raw men.

You have heard much of the powers with which commiſ-

ſioners were to be inveſted, for the purpoſe of ſettling this diſpute. Like moſt other things belonging to it, theſe too have made a much greater figure in talk, than they do in fact. There are but two commiſſioners, the two Howes; and their powers are extremely vague and undefined. It is a pity, methinks, that Congreſs had not had better information on this ſubject; if they had, it is to be preſumed, they would not have precipitated the declaration of independence, ſo as to preclude all poſſibility of negociation. I may venture to whiſper in your ear, that this excepted, I firmly believe, that America might have carried every other point; and certainly, there was a time, when this would have been deemed a conqueſt beyond the warmeſt wiſhes of the warmeſt American. Whether in the preſent poſture of affairs, it ſtill be ſo, is another queſtion: I can anſwer only for myſelf, that I would not even aſk ſo much. Different men will judge differently with reſpect to this conduct on the part of Great-Britain; I own I am bewildered and puzzled to account for it. After ſuch an aſtoniſhing expence as they have been at, and with ſuch fair proſpects as they have before them of being ſoon in a capacity to preſcribe their own terms, it certainly is extraordinary to find them condeſcending to be friends with us, on conditions as mortifying and degrading to them, as they are flattering to us. I can account for it but in one way; I really aſcribe it to their magnanimity. It muſt be an unpleaſing conteſt to the nation: I ſay the nation; for however expedient it may be for us to have it called a miniſterial war, no man who knows any thing of the Engliſh government, can imagine, that the miniſtry could have moved a ſtep in it, if it had not been the ſenſe of the nation. It muſt, too, be a moſt fruitleſs and unprofitable war; ſince every advantage they can gain, muſt in fact be a loſs, as being gained over themſelves. No wonder, therefore, they have been ſlow and backward to enter into it; no wonder they would be glad to be well rid of it, on almoſt any terms. I have ever been of

this opinion, and it was this perſuaſion alone that reconciled me to the meaſure of taking up arms. I ſee, however, the world around me viewing it in a different light; every conceſſion that is made to us, they attribute to timidity only, and deſpondency. I own appearances make for this conjecture; and, no doubt, Congreſs will give it its ſanction.

I have not adopted this opinion, that we might have peace with Great-Britain, on terms which would once have been thought moſt honorable, on ſlight grounds. Yeſterday, a letter was brought to me, making overtures for a negociation, from Lord Howe. I had expected it; and had my inſtructions. It was addreſſed, as I had foreſeen, to me as in my private character only. On the ground of independency, if we choſe to maintain it, this was not a mere matter of punctilio; it was the critical moment of trial, whether we would aſſert, or recede from our pretenſions. Never did men ſit in debate on a queſtion of higher magnitude: and when they had once determined to declare their country free, I ſee not why they might not ſupport this their declaration, by this as well as other means. A contrary conduct would certainly have indicated ſome want of firmneſs. Yet, I confeſs to you, I felt aukward upon the occaſion. The punctilio ſeemed, and it could not but ſeem, to be my own; and as ſuch it looked, methought, as though I were proud of my titles. Put yourſelf in my place, and ſee me, longing as you know I do moſt earneſtly for peace, yet turning my back on a gentleman, whom I had reaſon to conſider as the harbinger of it, only becauſe he aſked for MR. and not, GENERAL WASHINGTON. How often it is my lot to find it my indiſpenſible duty to act a part contrary to both my own ſentiments and inclinations! But, if I miſtake not, it is in ſuch inſtances only, that, properly ſpeaking, we manifeſt our fortitude and magnanimity.

I ſhall aſtoniſh you, when I inform you, that this firſt rebuff abated not the ardour of the noble commiſſioner. His

deputy paid us a ſecond viſit, and vouchſafed to honour me with the appellation of General. What name will you give to this condeſcenſion? I own it hurt me; and has well nigh led me into a train of thinking very different from all my former opinions. The gentleman who brought the meſſage, is a Colonel Patterſon, Adjutant General, and a ſenſible, well-informed man. He requeſted to ſpeak to me alone; and I was glad he did. After the firſt ſalutations, he told me the purport of the letter which had been refuſed; and his errand now was to aſk me to point out the moſt eligible means of opening a negociation, for the purpoſe of accommodating the unhappy diſpute. I replied, that I knew but of one way; and that was by application to Congreſs. He ſaid, the King's Commiſſioners would have no objection to treating with the members who compoſed the Congreſs, provided only that they came with legal authority from the regular Legiſlatures of their reſpective countries. I anſwered, they doubtleſs would come with ſuch authority; as, indeed, they could come with no other. I evidently ſaw his drift in the exception, as he did mine: and to put a ſtop to all poſſibility of miſtake, he declared it impoſſible for his maſters ever to acknowledge the Congreſs, as ſuch, a legal, and conſtitutional body of men; and as it ſeemed to be rather a punctilio of pride, than of any real importance, he hoped it might be waved. I ſtared: How, Sir, have you not already acknowledged the powers of Congreſs, by acknowledging the honourable rank I hold, and which I hold from them, and them only? That, ſaid he, was the conceſſion merely of politeneſs; and made for the purpoſe only of getting acceſs to me; and he was perſuaded, I was too ſenſible a man to lay any ſtreſs on ſo mere a trifle; I thanked him for his compliment, but aſſured him, that I meant to lay the moſt ſerious ſtreſs on it. If he really had had that opinion of my underſtanding which he was pleaſed then to expreſs, he muſt have ſuppoſed, that though a trifle in itſelf, it ceaſed to be ſo after I had made a point of it.

Words could not have told him more ſtrongly that our reſolutions were to aſſert and maintain our independency. And if the commiſſioners of the King of Great-Britain found themſelves either unable or unwilling to give up this, as a preliminary article, they and he muſt pardon me for ſaying, that I could but think them very idly employed in ſoliciting an interview with me. On this he prepared to take his leave, firſt adding with a degree of ſharpneſs and animation, that I own affected me: Sir, ſaid he, you are pleaſed to be cavalier with me: I conſider you as a well-meaning—I wiſh I could ſay, well-informed man; yet, I am miſtaken, if your head, as well as your heart, would not, at this moment, dictate a very different language. There may be heroiſm, for ought I know, in deſperately reſolving to go all lengths with the men with whom you have connected yourſelf; but it is madneſs: and you may be thankful, if poſterity gives no worſe a name to a man who has no judgment of his own. Wrong, Sir, your judgment no longer. We certainly have ſtooped as low as the proudeſt wrong-head among you could aſk us; but, if you really think, as you ſeem to affect to do, that we have made theſe overtures either from meanneſs, from a diſtruſt of our cauſe, or our ability to make good our juſt claims, you are out in all your reckoning. That the mean and narrow-minded leaders of your councils may diſſeminate ſuch opinions, in your unhappy country, I can eaſily ſuppoſe; but remember, Sir, you, and your party, owe ſome account to the world! and when the world ſhall come to know your infatuated inſolence in the inſtance before us, as know it they muſt, think how you will excuſe yourſelves? I replied with no leſs warmth, nor, I truſt, dignity. I was, indeed, ſtung: for after once having owned me as a General, you muſt confeſs there was ſomething ſingularly contemptuous in preſuming thus to ſchool me. A few perſonal civilities put an end to the conference.

I have tranſmitted a faithful account of it to Congreſs; but, as I can hardly ſuppoſe they will judge it expedient to make it public, I thought I owed to you, not wholly to diſappoint your curioſity. You will not, however, need me to caution you to be ſecret, as well on this as on other things, which I write to you.

One thing more I muſt not omit to mention to you. In my conference with Colonel Patterſon, I thought I could diſcover that it was intended I ſhould be impreſſed with a perſuaſion that the commiſſioners thought not unfavourably of our pretenſions, as urged in the beginning of the diſpute. This is to be accounted for: They are whigs; and if I am rightly informed, the General owes his ſeat in Parliament to the intereſt of the diſſenters. But why approve of our firſt pretenſions only? Surely if we were then right, we are not now wrong: I mean as to what we have a right to, by the principles of the conſtitution; the expediency of our meaſures is now out of queſtion. I cannot diſſociate the ideas between our having a right of reſiſtance in the caſe of taxation, and the ſame right in the caſe of legiſlating for us. You know I am no deep caſuiſt in political ſpeculations, but having happily been brought up in revolution principles, I thought I trod ſurely when I traced the footſteps of thoſe venerable men. Wonderful! Theſe too are the principles of our opponents; ſo that all our misfortune and fault is the having put in practice the very tenets which they profeſs to embrace.

But I ſhall exhauſt your patience; which I ſhould not do, foreſeeing as I do, that I ſhall, hereafter, have occaſion to put it to the trial.

I am with the trueſt regard,

Dear Lund,

Yours, &c.

G. W.

New-York, July 22, 1776.

To Mr. Lund Waſhington, &c.

I WISH I could ſay I thoroughly approved of all the new regulations in the new inſtitution of government in my native ſtate. It could, however, hardly have been expected, that a reformation ſo capital and comprehenſive ſhould be perfect at firſt; the wonder is, it is not ſtill more exceptionable. My heart glows with unuſual warmth, when I advert, as I often do, to that pure and diſintereſted ardour which muſt have animated the bulk of my countrymen throughout the whole of this controverſy. There may be exceptions amongſt us, and, no doubt, there are; but it is not fair to infer this from our uncommon impetuoſity and violence. This one would wiſh reſtrained, but, by no means extirpated; for is it not the effect of a highly agitated public ſpirit; the mere effervescence of good principles thrown into a ſtate of ſtrong fermentation? And, ſurely, even precipitancy is preferable to the ſpirit-breaking cautions of chill deſpondency. Yet I am no advocate, in general, either for raſh meaſures, or raſh men; but at ſuch a conjuncture as this, men had need to be ſtimulated by ſome more active principle than cool and ſober reaſon. They muſt be enthuſiaſts, or they will continue to be ſlaves.

I give this in anſwer to my friend Mr. Carter's objections to the firſt procedures of the new government. No doubt, Henry is, in many reſpects, the unfitteſt man in the ſtate for Governor of Virginia. He has no property, no learning, but little good ſenſe, and ſtill leſs virtue or public ſpirit; but he is the idol of the people; and, as it is by their means only that you can hope to effect the grand ſchemes which you have meditated, you muſt humour them, and indulge them with their rattle. They will ſoon tire of him; and the opportu-

nity muſt then be watched, gently to lead them to a better choice; for they may be led though they cannot be driven. And though it be, alas! but too true, that they often miſtake their real intereſts, I am of opinion they never miſtake them long. Sooner or later, they will judge and act from their ſettled feelings; and theſe, I take it, are generally founded in their ſettled intereſts. When great enterprizes are to be performed, we may well diſpenſe with ſome little errors in judgment: when without that, we have, in its ſtead, that which perhaps we could not have with it; I mean that undiſciplined ardour which is infinitely better adapted to our purpoſes.

There cannot be a more ſtriking inſtance that the judgment of the people may, in general, be ſafely truſted, in the long run, than is to be met with in Virginia. Very few countries have to boaſt of more men of reſpectable underſtandings; I know of none that can produce a family, all of them diſtinguiſhed as clever men, like our Lees. They are all of them the very men one would wiſh for, to take the lead of a willing multitude; for, they are certainly men of ſhining talents, and their talents are of that particular kind which uſually render men popular. No men were ever more ſo, than the men in queſtion once were. It is obvious, this is no longer the caſe; and the reaſon muſt be that they are no longer worthy of it. With all their cleverneſs, they are ſelfiſh in the extreme. The people, at length, have found this out; or, no doubt, R. H. Lee would have now been governor, the grand object of all his aims.

You would be mortified to hear the criticiſms which are common here on Henry's inauguration ſpeech. It is, indeed, a poor and pitiful performance; and yet I can believe, that ſet off by his ſmooth and oily delivery, it would appear clever when he ſpoke it. Why did he not aſk Mr. Page to prepare it for him? There is not a man in America more capable. The counſellors of ſtate are certainly irreproachable, and will do honour to thoſe who appointed them. I am

particularly pleaſed with the ſucceſs of my honeſt brother-in-law, Bat. Dandridge; and the pleaſure is not leſſened by the aſſurance he makes me, that my letters were ſerviceable to him; there being but few men whom I love more than I do him. As you are ſoon to go down the country, you will ſee him; and therefore ſpare me the trouble of writing particularly to him. My friends muſt now be ſo indulgent to me, as to wave the matter of compliment; I think myſelf happy, whenever I can write, as I ſhould, on urgent buſineſs. You know how tickliſh my ſituation is; little as one would think, there is to be envied in it, I yet am envied. And though, in all good reaſon, their fears ſhould take a direct contrary courſe, there are who are forever ſuggeſting ſuſpicions and jealouſies of the army and its commander. My own heart aſſures me, I mean them no ill; however, if I really have the influence and aſcendency which they ſuppoſe, I will, for their ſakes as well as my own, hereafter maintain it at ſome little coſt. A thouſand conſiderations determine me to ſtrain every nerve to prevent the army's being under any other controul, whilſt I live. Let a perſuaſion of the neceſſity of this, if occaſion ſhould ariſe, be ſeaſonably urged in my native ſtate: and, in the mean while, let ſome more than ordinary pains be taken to make me popular. Their own honor and intereſt are both concerned in my being ſo. Shew this to Mr. Dandridge; and, as you both can enter into my meaning, even from the moſt diſtant hints, I can reſt ſatisfied, that you will do every thing I wiſh you.

We have lately had a general review; and I have much pleaſure in informing you, that we made a better appearance, and went through our exerciſes more like ſoldiers, than I had expected. The Southern ſtates are raſh and blameable in the judgment they generally form of their brethren of the four New-England ſtates; I do aſſure you, with all my partiality for my own countrymen, and prejudices againſt them, I cannot but conſider them as the flower of the American army.

They are a ſtrong, vigorous, and hardy people, inured to labour and toil; which our people ſeldom are. And though our hot and eager ſpirits may, perhaps, ſuit better in a ſudden and deſperate enterprize; yet in the way in which wars are now carried on, you muſt look for permanent advantages only from that patient and perſevering temper, which is the reſult of a life of labour. The New-Englanders are cool, conſiderate and ſenſible; whilſt we are all fire and fury: like their climate, they maintain an equal temperature, whereas we cannot ſhine, but we burn. They have an uniformity and ſtability of character, to which the people of no other ſtates have any pretenſions; hence they muſt, and will always preſerve their influence in this great Empire. Were it not for the drawbacks and the diſadvantages, which the influence of their popular opinions, on the ſubject of government, have on their army, they ſoon might, and probably would, give law to it. If General Putnam had the talents of Mr. S. Adams, or Mr. Adams had his, perhaps, even at this moment, this had not been matter of conjecture. But, Putnam is a plain, blunt, undeſigning old fellow, whoſe views reach no further than the duties of his profeſſion. He is, indeed, very ignorant; yet, I find him a uſeful officer; and chiefly becauſe he neither plagues me, nor others, with wrangling claims of privileges. I owe him too no ſmall acknowledgments for the fairneſs of his accounts. I could open to you ſome ſtrange ſcenes in this way. Some people ſeem to have gotten ſuch a habit of cheating government, that, though ſufficiently conſcientious in other reſpects, they really are far leſs ſcrupulous in their manner of charging than, I think, becomes them.—But, as I have often told you, General Mercer is the man, on whom theſe ſtates muſt reſt their hopes. The character that one of his countrymen gave to the Pretender, fits him exactly; "He is the moſt cautious man I ever ſaw, not to be a coward; and the braveſt not to be raſh." In my judgment, he is not inferior even to General Lee, in military knowledge;

and, in almoſt every thing elſe, he is infinitely his ſuperior. Yet the overbearing virtues of this laſt named gentleman are uſeful to us, eſpecially at our ſetting out: we wanted not the ſober and ſlow deductions of argument and reaſon: and Lee, like the author of Common Senſe, has talents perfectly formed to dazzle and confound.

I thank you for your care in making the remittances you mention to Meſſrs. Carey and Co. I ſincerely wiſh they may arrive ſafe; as I certainly owe it to them, to take every ſtep in my power to make them eaſy. There is a pleaſure in doing as one ought, in little as well as great affairs; but, in my preſent circumſtances, I ſhould often want this pleaſure, were it not for your affectionate aſſiduity, and truly friendly attention. God bleſs you, my dear friend, for every inſtance of your care and concern for me!

I am, &c.

G. W.

June 24, 1776.

To Mrs. Waſhington.

MY DEAREST LIFE AND LOVE,

YOU have hurt me, I know not how much, by the inſinuation in your laſt, that my letters to you have lately been leſs frequent, becauſe I have felt leſs concern for you. The ſuſpicion is moſt unjuſt;—may I not add, it is moſt unkind? Have we lived, now almoſt a ſcore of years, in the cloſeſt and deareſt conjugal intimacy to ſo little purpoſe that, on an appearance only of inattention to you, and which you might have accounted for in a thouſand ways more natural and more

probable, you ſhould pitch upon that ſingle motive which alone is injurious to me? I have not, I own, wrote ſo often to you as I wiſhed, and as I ought: But think of my ſituation and then aſk your heart, if I be WITHOUT EXCUSE. We are not, my deareſt, in circumſtances the moſt favourable to our happineſs: but let us not, I beſeech you, idly make them worſe, by indulging ſuſpicions and apprehenſions which minds in diſtreſs are but too apt to give way to. I never was, as you have often told me, even in my better and more diſengaged days, ſo attentive to the little punctilios of friendſhip, as, it may be, became me: but, my heart tells me, there never was a moment in my life ſince I firſt knew you, in which it did not cleave and cling to you with the warmeſt affection: and it muſt ceaſe to beat, ere it can ceaſe to wiſh for your happineſs, above any thing on earth.

I congratulate you moſt cordially on the fair proſpect of recovery of your amiable daughter-in-law; nor can I wonder, that this ſecond loſs of a little one ſhould affect you; I fear the fatigues of the journey, and the perpetual agitations of a camp, were too much for her. They are, however, both young and healthy; ſo that there can be little doubt of their ſoon repairing the loſs.

And now will my deareſt love permit me, a little more earneſtly than I have ever yet done, to preſs you to conſent to that ſo neceſſary, ſo ſafe and eaſy, though ſo dreaded a thing—the being innoculated? It was always adviſeable; but at this juncture it ſeems to be almoſt abſolutely neceſſary.

I am far from ſure, that, that reſtleſs madman, our quondam Governor, from the mere luſt of doing miſchief, will not ſoon betake himſelf to the carrying on a predatory war in our rivers. And as Potomack will certainly be thought moſt favourable for his purpoſes, as affording him ſcope to keep without the reach of annoyance, I have little reaſon to flatter myſelf, that it would not be particularly pleaſing to him, to vent his ſpite at my houſe. Let him; it would affect me

only as it might affect you; and, for this reaſon, among others, I wiſh you out of his reach. Yet I think I would not have you quit your houſe profeſſedly from an apprehenſion of a viſit from him: An appearance of fearfulneſs and timidity, even in a woman of my family, might have a bad effect; but, I muſt be ſomething more or leſs than man, not to wiſh you out of the way of a danger, which, to ſay the leaſt, muſt be diſagreeable to you, and could do good to no one. All this makes for your going to Philadelphia, a place of perfect ſecurity; and it would be almoſt worth while to be innoculated, if it were only for the fair pretence it furniſhes you with of quitting Virginia, at a time when I could not but be exceedingly uneaſy at your remaining in it. But I flatter myſelf any further arguments will be unneceſſary, when I ſhall add, as I now do, that till you have had the ſmall-pox, anxiouſly as elſe I ſhould wiſh for it, I never can think of conſenting to your paſſing the winter here in quarters with me.

I would have Lund Waſhington immediately remove all the unmarried and ſuſpicious of the ſlaves, to the quarters in Frederick. The harveſting muſt be got in by hirelings. Let him not keep any large ſtock of grain trod out, eſpecially at the mill, or within the reach of water carriage; and in particular, let as little as may be, be left at Clifton's quarters. It will not be too late, even in the firſt week of July, to ſow the additional ſupply of hemp and flax ſeed which Mr. Mifflin has procured for me in Philadelphia; and which I hope will be with you before this letter. For obvious reaſons, you will not ſow it on the iſland, nor by the water ſide. But I hope you will have a good account of your crop on the Ohio. If Bridgey continues refractory and riotous, though I know you can ill ſpare him, let him by all means be ſent off, as I hope Jack Cuſtis's boy Joe already is, for his ſaucineſs at Cambridge.

My attention is this moment called off to the diſcovery, or pretended diſcovery, of a moſt wild and daring plot. It is

impoſſible, as yet, to develope the myſtery in which it either is, or is ſuppoſed to be involved. Thus much only I can find out with certainty, that it will be a fine field for a war of lies on both ſides. No doubt it will make a good deal of noiſe in the country; and there are who think it uſeful to have the minds of the people kept conſtantly on the fret by rumours of this ſort. For my part, I who am ſaid to be the object principally aimed at in it, find myſelf perfectly at my eaſy; and I have mentioned it to you only from an apprehenſion that, hearing it from others and not from me, you might imagine I was in the midſt of danger that I knew not of.

The perpetual ſolicitude of your poor heart about me, is certainly highly flattering to me; yet I ſhould be happy to be able to quiet your fears. Why do you complain of my reſerves? Or, how could you imagine that I diſtruſted either your prudence or your fidelity? I have the higheſt opinion of them both. But why ſhould I teaze you with tedious details of ſchemes and views which are perpetually varying; and which therefore might, not improbably, miſlead, where I meant to inform you? Suffice it that I ſay, what I have often before told you, that, as far as I have the controul of them, all our preparations of war aim only at peace. Neither do I, at this moment, ſee the leaſt likelihood of there being any conſiderable military operations this ſeaſon; and, if not in this ſeaſon, certainly in no other. It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that, in the leiſure and quiet of winter quarters, men will not have the virtue to liſten to the dictates of plain common ſenſe and ſober reaſon. The only true intereſt of both ſides is reconciliation; nor can there be a point in the world clearer, than that both ſides muſt be loſers by war, in a manner which even peace will not ſoon compenſate for. We muſt, at laſt, agree and be friends; for we cannot live without them, and they will not without us; and a bye-ſtander might well be puzzled to find out, why as good terms cannot be given and ta-

ken now, as when we ſhall have well nigh ruined each other by the mutual madneſs of cutting one another's throats. For all theſe reaſons, which cannot but be as obvious to the Engliſh commiſſioners, and ours, as they are to me, I am at a loſs to imagine how any thing can ariſe to obſtruct a negociation, and, of conſequence, a pacification. You who know my heart, know that there is not a wiſh nearer to it than this is; but I am prepared for every event one only excepted—I mean a diſhonorable peace. Rather than that, let me, though it be with the loſs of every thing elſe I hold dear, continue this horrid trade, and, by the moſt unlikely means, be the unworthy inſtrument of preſerving political ſecurity and happineſs to them, as well as to ourſelves.—Pity this cannot be accompliſhed, without fixing on me that ſad name, Rebel. I love my king; you know I do: a ſoldier, a good man cannot but love him. How peculiarly hard then is our fortune to be deemed traitors to ſo good a king! But, I am not without hopes, that even he will yet ſee cauſe to do me juſtice; poſterity, I am ſure, will. Mean while, I comfort myſelf with the reflection, that this has been the fate of the beſt and braveſt men, even of the barons who obtained Magna Charta, whilſt the diſpute was depending. This, however, anxiouſly as I wiſh for it, it is not mine to command: I ſee my duty, that of ſtanding up for the liberties of my country; and whatever difficulties and diſcouragements lie in my way, I dare not ſhrink from it; and I rely on that being, who has not left to us the choice of duties, that whilſt I conſcientiouſly diſcharge mine, I ſhall not finally loſe my reward. If I really am not a bad man, I ſhall not long be ſo ſet down.

Aſſure yourſelf, I will pay all poſſible attention to your recommendations. But happy as I am in an opportunity of obliging you, even in the ſmalleſt things, take it not amiſs, that I uſe the freedom with you, to whiſper in your ear, to be ſparing of them. You know how I am circumſtanced: hardly

the promotion of a ſubaltern is left to me; and free and independent as I am, I reſolve to remain ſo. I owe the Congreſs no obligations for any perſonal favours done to myſelf; nor will I run in debt to them for favours to others. Beſides, I am mortified to have to aſk of them, what, in ſound policy (if other motives had been wanting) they ought to have granted to me unaſked. I cannot deſcribe to you the inconveniencies this army ſuffers, for want of this conſequence being given to its commander in chief. But, as theſe might be encreaſed, were my peculiar ſituation in this reſpect generally known, I forbear; only enjoining on you a cautious ſilence on this head. In a regular army, our Virginia young men, would certainly, in general, make the beſt officers; but I regret that they have not now put it in my power juſtly to pay them this compliment. They diſlike their northern allies; and this diſlike is the ſource of infinite miſchiefs and vexations to me. In the many diſputes and quarrels of this ſort which we have had, one thing has particularly ſtruck me. My countrymen are not inferior in underſtanding; and are certainly ſuperior in that diſtinguiſhed ſpirit and high ſenſe of honor which ſhould form the character of an officer. Yet, ſomehow or other, it forever happens, that in every altercation, they are proved to be in the wrong; and they expect of me attentions and partialities which it is not in my power to ſhew them.

Let me rely that your anſwer to this will be dated in Philadelphia. If I am not very buſily engaged, (which I hope may not be the caſe) perhaps I may find ways and means to pay you a viſit of a day or two; but this I rather hint as what I wiſh, than what I dare bid you expect. If you ſtill think the fragments of the ſet of greys I bought of Lord Botetourt unequal to the journey, let Lund Waſhington ſell them ſingly, or otherwiſe as he can, to the beſt advantage, and purchaſe a new ſet of bays. I could as you deſire, get them here, and perhaps on better terms; but I have a notion,

whether well or ill founded I know not, that they never anſwer well in Virginia. I beg to be affectionately remembered to all our friends and relations; and that you will continue to believe me to be

Your moſt Faithful
And tender Huſband,
G. W.

THE END.